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853 grandmother, by name Mishidohi, who had an adult son and had had no other child since, prepared light beer and other appropriate food and succeeded in secreting milk in her own breast ; so the child was saved !

856 826 A child during these first months of its existence is regarded as a very weak creature. "I mati !" i. e. "It is nothing but water !" Hence perhaps the curious idea that a baby, just like a new born animal, is able to swim, at any rate it cannot be drowned : it floats on the water. When a woman carrying a little child on her back crosses a river and is in danger of being swept away by the stream, people shout to her from the shore : "Untie the 'ntehe' and let the baby cross. Think of yourself, the little one will follow all right." They say: "Psa yila, it is taboo that a baby should sink." Note the curious use of the word "yila" in this sentence.

3) Dentition.

856 364 351 As soon as the child has cut the two lower and upper incisors, the mother takes a white bead (tjambu) and ties it to one of the child's hairs above the forehead. This white bead is said to help the other teeth to come out normally. If this precaution were not taken, the child would not become intelligent ; he would shiver instead of smiling ; he would bring forward his lips and his tongue to prevent the air from getting into his mouth ! When all the teeth are duly cut, the bead is removed and thrown away *talen*, viz. on the *tala*. The *tala* is the ash-heap, the place behind the hut on which everyone throws ashes and dirt. It plays a great part in the customs of the Thongas and other South African Bantus.

195 The teeth (tinyo-menyo) of the children are called figuratively *hobe*. The *hobe* (pl. *tihobe*) means the grain of pounded maize which is white and very similar to a tooth. Hence the expression : "A humi hobe," "he has got out a grain of maize," employed to indicate the cutting of the teeth.

787 766 836 When a child cuts his upper teeth first, it is a bad omen. In the Northern clans and especially amongst the Ba-Pedi, it is a great taboo. At his death the child must be buried in wet soil.

5) The tying of the cotton string.

854 When the child "tiyelanyana" viz. "becomes a little firm,"
857 the mother, having to plough her fields and to cook the food, begins to seat him on the sandy soil, after having made a kind of hole of about five inches in depth. We have seen Thonga babies already sitting at the age of two months. But this "dumping" hardly meets all the requirements, and the mother looks for a girl to help her to take care of the baby (wa ku tlanga na ye, to play with him). She puts the child in the charge of an elder sister or a cousin ; a girl of five to ten is quite strong enough for the purpose. I have often admired the patience of these miniature nurses, sometimes not very much bigger than the child they carry, with their very troublesome babies.

852 But very soon the child begins to crawl (kasa) and this is the
715 time when a very striking rite is performed. This rite seems to be practised all over the tribe, but it has more importance in the Northern clans than amongst the Ba-Ronga. I shall here give the description of Viguet, who belonged to the Tsungu clan and had emigrated to the Spelonken. My readers must forgive me if I cannot tell the story with all its details and if I am obliged to write some of them in Latin (1).

851 These are the ipsissima verba of my informant : "This is a
833 great law amongst the Thongas. When a child begins to crawl,
766 even before, the *puri* is tied round his waist. The *puri* is a
842 cotton (2) string. Father and mother fix the day ; if they forget to do so, their parents, (the grandparents) will remind them of the law. They must have sexual intercourse, but in such a way that the mother will not become pregnant, s. n. i. (Annotatio 2). The mother will have to take in her hands "their filth" (thyaka ra bona) smear the string with it and tie it round the child. It will

(1) A more complete description of this rite and of some others related to the taboos of the Thongas will be found in the Revue d'Ethnographie et de Sociologie, Oct. 1910, Paris.

(2) There are plants of cotton probably subspontaneous in the Low Country of the Transvaal of Delagoa Bay.

1 [See p. 676 IN these categories or IN 116--Analyst]

851 remain there till it falls to pieces. After this operation the
766 child is "grown up" and three things are allowed which were
833 taboo before :

1) The child, if he dies, can be buried on the hill, in dry soil. Before the *boha puri* he would have been buried in wet soil, near the river, as is customary with twins and children who have cut their upper teeth first.

2) He can participate in the strange purification called *hlamba ndjaka* which takes place after the death of one of the inhabitants of the village (See ceremonies of death).

852 3) The parents can again have conjugal intercourse, though
766 they must avoid conception till the child is weaned. Before this
839 ceremony it was absolutely prohibited, and should they have
821 sinned in this respect and the mother have conceived, they would
842 be very guilty! It is a dangerous taboo! They would have "stolen" the child, stolen it from the law (yiba nawen). The child would not have "entered the law." It would be useless to tie the string round him in order to repair the evil done. Should he live long, should he even become an old man, he will have to be buried in wet soil, otherwise the rain would be prevented from falling.

Amongst the Malulekes and the Hlengwes such children are even burnt after their death. We shall speak later on about the mysterious relation established by the Thongas between these children, their burial, and the rain.

852 Amongst the Ba-Ronga this rite is called *boha nshale* (to tie
854 the cotton) and can be performed in the same way or even more simply by the father (Annotatio 3).[1] Parents, when they have duly tied the string on the little one, are said to have *fuya ñwana*, viz. taken possession of the child.

Amongst them again, another thing is then allowed which was taboo before. The child can be carried on the shoulders without ntehe by the arms alone (hi minkono).

851 It is clear that the tying of the cotton string means the official reception of the child into the family, even into human society. Before that, he was hardly considered as a human being, he was *shilo* (a thing), *khuna* (an incomplete being). Now he is *nkulu*,

2 [See p. 516 in these categories or in 116 - Analyst]

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881 long. Sometimes, when game has been plentiful, one of the men comes and squeezes the half-digested grass found in the bowels of an antelope over the porridge, saying to the boys : " You must have something of the results of your hunting too! "

This diet nauseates them at first. They sometimes vomit right on the table. No matter, every particle of the porridge must be eaten all the same. When they are accustomed to the diet, they grow fat, and it is wonderful how their physical appearance sometimes improves during these few months.

Punishments. Blows are punishments for minor offences. Should some more serious fault have been committed, the father of the circumcision condemns the boy to " drink goat's milk." There is a shrub called " mbuti ; " the same word also means goat. Three sticks of it are taken. The boy must present his hands, put them against each other and separate the fingers. The sticks are introduced between the fingers and a strong man, taking both ends of the sticks in his hands, presses them together and lifts the poor boy, squeezing and half crushing his fingers.

[688] In former times, the boys who had tried to escape or who had revealed the secrets of the sungi to women, or to the uninitiated, were hanged on the last day of the school and burnt to ashes, together with all the contents of the lodge.

766 881 *Death.* The circumcised must also be prepared to die if their wound does not heal properly and if the Manyabe's medicine is not successful. Many of them have actually died. It is absolutely forbidden to mourn over them. The mother of the deceased is informed of his death by a notch cut in the edge of the pot in which she brings the food. She must not cry. The corpse is buried in a wet place, in a grave dug with sticks, as it would make people suspicious if the shepherds were to go to the village and fetch spades for this work.

IV. *The teaching of formulae.*

881 So the boys are taught endurance, obedience, manliness. But there is another side to the training of the Ngoma. It has sometimes been compared to a school, and it is true that there is some

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consequence of the death. If it be the hut of one of the subordinates, the roof is simply lifted off and thrown away into the bush.

Another very significant rite in connexion with the closing of the hut is accomplished on the death of the master of the village. A branch is cut from the tree of the village, the tree which was revealed by the divinatory bones as the one near which the headman had to build (See Part II Ch. II) ; half of the branch is placed across the great gate of the village, which is then closed and another gate opened, at some distance, in the fence ; the other half is put over the door of the crushed hut.

There seem to be great variations in the performance of these ceremonies everywhere. I believe, without being able to vouch for it, that when two family gatherings take place during this last period of the mourning, the first is held to proclaim the new master of the village and the second to distribute the inheritance amongst the heirs-at-law. At any rate these two important acts take place at the gatherings. As the inheritance consists mainly of live stock — human stock, the wives of the deceased, I shall describe the adjudication when treating of the fate of widows.

2) Family rites in the Northern clans.

A month after the burial, there is a first gathering of the grave-diggers. They are invited by the widows to a beer-feast. This beer is called : "the beer of the hyenas," as the hyenas also dig graves! No equivocal compliment is intended, the widows merely meaning to thank these men for their services.

In the northern clans, *yindlu a yi yili*, the hut is not taboo. It can be slept in again after the five days of the Great Mourning. The plaster of the doorposts is repaired, and a new crown is put on the top when the hut again finds an owner (1). The feast of the

(1) The hut of a leper alone is considered irremediably tabooed as the sufferer is buried in it. They dig a hole into which he is pushed by means of sticks. The roof is crushed down over him.

VII. *Various cases of death.*

766 So far I have treated specially of the death of a headman, who had reached adult age, and died at home. There are a few other cases to describe.

Should the man *have died far away from home*, in Johannesburg for instance, no ceremony will take place before the news is entirely confirmed. Then all the relatives assemble. A grave is dug and all his mats and his clothing are buried in it. These objects which he was in the habit of using every day, and which have been soiled by the exudations from his body, are *himself*. A sacrifice will be made over the grave, not by means of the nkanye twig but with a fowl which is thrown on the grave. Formerly the fowl was left on the ground, but nowadays the uterine nephews steal it. The widow will eat with her hands till the burial, though death took place long before and was already publicly known ; she will begin to use a spoon only after the burial has taken place. This fact illustrates strangely the ritualistic notion which is at the base of all these mourning customs! The steam baths, the sprinkling on the fifth day, the singing, dancing and condolence visits take place just the same as in ordinary mourning.

In the Northern clans, the belongings of a man who dies far away (matikwen, in the lands) are burnt. The purifying sprinklings are performed. The same is done for relatives who die accidentally and whose corpses have not been buried ; for instance, if they were killed by a wild beast or in battle.

When a *stranger* dies in a Thonga village, and no one knows him, "*a nga na ntshumu*"—"he does not matter," says Viguet. The grown-up men will bury him. They dig a hole and drag the corpse into it with a rope. They do not touch it. There is no contagion, therefore no ceremony of purification. Amongst the Malulekes and Hlengwes, such a corpse is burnt. They attend to the cremation and do not leave the spot till they hear an explosion (boom!), which shows that all danger (khombo) has departed.

766 When an *infant* dies, it must be buried in a broken pot. The

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766 pot is placed in the earth, the opening being half covered with a layer of ashes, in such a way that there remains a passage for the air. It is taboo to bury it otherwise; until it has passed through the rite of presentation to the moon (page 53). *An older child* is buried in the ordinary way, but with very few ceremonies. There is no religious act. The mother alone attends the funeral. The father digs the grave, but he does nothing else. He says: "We, holders of the assagai, do not bury such little ones. They are but water, they are but a womb, (nyimba) they are but a *ntche*."
854 A father pays very little attention to little children. It is only when they begin to smile that he will show them some affection. Then it may be that he will press his little one against his breast and kiss its temple, especially when he returns home from a journey.

766 *In the case of suicide*, the corpse is buried according to ordinary rules. But the tree on which the man hanged himself is cut down. It is taboo: other people might commit suicide at the same place. Its wood is not used for fuel.

If a woman dies during pregnancy, she must be cut open to see what the sex of her child is. This must be done inside the grave, before the earth is covered in. As Mboza said: "The air (moya) must come out." He told me the story of a husband in the Mabota country who nearly fainted when obliged to perform this painful operation. But it is a great taboo, as the woman might become a god of bitterness (shikwembo sha shibiti), if buried without this precaution (See Part VI). In the Maluleke clan women who die pregnant, or in confinement, are cremated.

Lepers alone are buried in the hut. In Maputju the father and the mother are buried in front of the hut whilst the regular place in other parts of the Ronga territory is behind the hut, *mahosi*. The members of the reigning family are buried in the *ntimu*, the sacred wood which belongs to them. Every big family may have its *ntimu* and the men are buried there according to their villages; each village has its place and the place is called after the name of the headman of the village. So in the Lebombo sacred wood, there was "the village of Nkolele, to the south, the village of Shihubane, to the north, etc."

843 remove the blood. The Thongas think that, as the menses are suspended, the blood accumulates in the body and must be taken away.

Pregnancy is not considered as a tabooed period. As we have just seen, sexual relations are allowed during that time, even recommended as favourable to the growth of the child. However, in view of the impending birth, some special taboos have been added to those which apply to all women.

A pregnant woman *must not drink water when standing up*. She must kneel down, otherwise the water would fall violently on the head of the child and hurt it!

843 It is taboo for her to *wrap her body* in too much clothing.
845 She must keep her belly bare and never throw her dress (kapulane) over her shoulders, lest the baby come to the light with its head covered with membranes, a complication which is very much dreaded by Thonga women.

She must not take *the sauce* of her porridge *too hot*. The child might be scalded inside and have black spots when born.

It is also taboo to *prepare the ntche before the birth*, as no one knows what will happen. The child might die!

843 The future mother must *not* eat *pigeon's meat*, because pigeons
825 have no blood in the muscles of their breast. She would have no milk herself wherewith to nurse the baby. Nor must she even *look at a monkey*, lest she "take to herself" (tekela) the form of the animal and the child be like it!

A woman, in the beginning of pregnancy, must not visit a sick person. The latter might die.

843 As regards women dying during pregnancy, see page 166.

766 *Miscarriages* are very much feared amongst South Africans,
731 not for themselves, but because they are accompanied by an
789 uncontrolled effusion of a blood which is a terrible taboo. The
826 discharged foetus must be buried in wet soil, otherwise the rain will not fall; the country having been polluted will be dried up by hot winds. A strange rite called *mbelele* is performed in times of drought, when all the graves of children born prematurely and buried on the hill are searched, and their contents thrown into the mud, near the river. We shall discuss in Part VI the

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846 A demonstration of joy takes place at the birth of any subsequent
831 child, but the kunga is only performed for the first-born. It does not seem that in the case of the first-born child, as in the case of bowumba (see p. 125) the gifts of kunga are subject to any taboo.

8) Loss of children.

766 A woman who loses an infant (wa ku felwa) is deeply contam-
783 inated with the defilement of death. She must bury it herself
834 without aid from her husband. Next day, she goes behind the
853 hut, kneels down and draws off her own milk on to the ground. She does this until the secretion has ceased. This is taboo ; her milk is polluted ; no drop of it must fall in the gardens. She must avoid crossing the fields and going to the storehouses to fetch food.
864 Until she has been "put right again (busetela)," she eats with a spoon. To use a spoon is a bad omen for a woman, because it reminds her of death. That is the reason why men adopt this civilized custom more readily than women. During her mourning, no sexual relations are allowed. When menstruation begins again, she first keeps silent, and does not tell her husband. Only on the second or third occasion does she inform him of the fact. He can then purify her ; this is done in the same way as in the case of widows. (See p. 154.) Then he buys new clothing for her and she resumes her ordinary mode of life. Everybody seeing her with this new attire will know that "she has been repaired." Should any one else than the husband give her this clothing, the latter will be greatly offended and accuse her of having relations with a lover.

765 A man does not put on *malopa*, mourning clothing, for a child
586 who was not yet of age. The woman alone does so. However a husband is always grieved at the death of his child and a sad event like this often leads to dreadful results. He will begin to think that his wife is a witch and has eaten her own child by her magical powers. Such an accusation is almost sure to end in a divorce.

A woman who has *lost many children*, three or four, is considered

643 588 345 some woman may come and live with him (titlhuba), as in cases of elopement — in which case he must go, according to the law, early in the morning to the parents of the girl and denounce himself as the abductor (p. 119) ; but none of these women can be his official wife ; they may bear him children, but these will be *makohlwa*, those who have no right to royalty ; the young chief may not wed his official wife, she who is to become the mother of the heir to the throne, until after the death of his father.

643 603 345 There is a saying, a precept of the royal code as follows : "Hosi a yi faneli ku bona ntukulu," a chief must never see his grandson, i. e. the one who will eventually succeed his son in the royal line. The Ba-Ngoni of Gungunyana (in Gaza) have the same custom ; but with them things are arranged differently. The eldest son of the chief's principal wife, when at the requisite age for marriage, takes a wife and loses the right of succession ; it is the youngest son, still young at the time of his father's death, who inherits the throne, because he has no children of his own. This leads to jealousy and civil war between brothers ; it has brought numberless misfortunes to the royal family of Gaza, and it was one of the causes of the downfall of Gungunyana. The Thonga custom is much more simple and less dangerous to the maintenance of peace ; the chief must not see his grandson, therefore his son will not be officially married until after his father's death. Any wives he may previously have taken will be morganatic and their children are not entitled to inherit.

I have been told by Mankhelu that when a chief lives to be very old and does not wish to delay the marriage of his son and heir, he can himself pay the lobolo and acquire, for his son, the official wife who will be considered as being "the wife of the country." But this seems to be an exceptional occurrence.

B. CORONATION OF THE CHIEF.

643 766 In all Thonga clans the death of a chief is kept secret for one year or more, as we shall see. Amongst the Nkunas the official mourning for the deceased takes place the same day as the coron-

643 766 701 ation of his successor. All the regiments of the army are summoned, together with groups of warriors delegated by foreign clans. The mourning ceremonies are first performed. (See later on). Then, at the end of the afternoon, says Mankhelu, the great counsellors send a herald to the circle of warriors. He shouts: "Khaula!" viz., "keep silent!" The new chief comes out of the hut and stands alone in the midst of the circle. "Do you see him," says the herald... "It is the chief!" — "Who is he?" ask the warriors, who wish to know his new name. — "It is Muhlaba Dabuka," he answered, when the present Nkuna chief was proclaimed. Formerly his name was Shikuna. Now he adopted this new name, borrowed from one of the Ngoni chiefs of Bilen. "He who wants to fight, can fight," he adds. This is an invitation to those who wish to protest against the coronation to state the fact plainly. When Muhlaba was proclaimed, the Masakomo family left the capital in anger, as they thought they were deprived of their right. (See later on.) Such an occurrence is not rare owing to the irregularities which so frequently take place in the succession.

If the chief is still a child he is carried on a shield, or put on the roof of a hut, so that everybody may see him.

In the Ronga clans the ceremony is conducted as follows. Let me describe it with all the details supplied by Tobane.

643 609 648 First of all sacrifices are made to the gods to ask that this ceremony may pass off quietly, happily, without quarrelling, and then the date is fixed. Invitations are sent to the surrounding little kingdoms, or at least to all those who are on friendly relations with the tribe. For instance, supposing the installation to be that of the chief of Mpfumo, invitations would be sent to Maputju, Tembe, Matjolo, Nondwane, Ñwamba and Shirinda. Manyisa and Ntimane are regarded as "being of a different mind" (moya muñwana), and "good will only reaches as far as the river Nkomati," to give a literal translation of the expression used by my informant; this means that relations with the more distant countries are hardly those of even ordinary civility. The warriors of the invited tribes assemble, in greater or smaller numbers; sometimes only a few delegates attend, but they do not proceed at once to the capital. Etiquette requires that each one should

643 Gigiseka. The last named was very courageous, and the cunning Maphunga succeeded in poisoning him treacherously, through the agency of a dissolute woman.

E. DEATH.

643 When a chief has grown very old, he no longer goes out of [763] the royal hut. His counsellors take his place in the management 766 of affairs and he dies surrounded by mystery. It must be so, as his death must remain unknown during a whole year. "We reap and we bow down (korama)" viz. "we till the ground and reap again before the event is made public (palusha)" says Mankhelu.

So the chief is buried during the night ; no lamentations are heard ; his wives and his grave-diggers undergo the purification ceremonies and take the vapour baths in secret. It may be that the wives who dwell in remote places will not hear a word of their husband's death. The fire of the royal hut will not be kindled in the usual and ritual way, but it will be kept burning the whole year. The decease is formally announced to some few individuals, to the White Government officials, to the heir (who views the corpse), and to the counsellors, but the rest of the country is supposed to be in ignorance of the occurrence. Of course the secret will not be kept absolutely. The truth will leak out... But no one will dare to speak openly on the subject (1).

643 A special hut is set apart into which the counsellors enter under 645 pretext of discussing matters of state with the chief, who is said to be very ill and unable to show himself. As a matter of fact, he has been buried for some time.

(1) I was staying at Nondwane when Mapunga, the chief who preceded Mahazule, died, and I heard on several occasions, in June and July 1891, the warriors practising on their antelope horns the airs to be played when the mourning should be made public. The death must have occurred during 1890, but nothing was said about it. After the news had been published, Manganyele, a young heathen of the district of Libombo, remarked to me one day: "When last season (about Xmas 1890) we saw the miphimbi (trees bearing fruit similar to an apricot) so heavily laden with fruit, (there had been an exceptionally heavy crop), we felt sure the chief must have died and that he had sent us this plentiful supply.." A typical remark, aptly illustrating the semi-ignorance in which the tribe is kept of the death of the chief.

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643 What is the reason for this silence? According to the old
643 men I consulted, it is to prevent enemies taking advantage of the
766 confusion consequent on the death of the chief to attack the country. Undoubtedly this custom is also intended to give the principal counsellors time to prepare for the installation of the new chief and to prevent bloody contests.

643 The grave of the chief does not differ from those of his subjects.
766 As it has been dug secretly in the sacred wood (ntimu), its whereabouts are not known to most of the people. In some clans or sub-clans the earth of the tumulus is levelled, so that no sign whatever remains to show where the body has been buried. This is said to be done in order to prevent enemies from exhuming the corpse and cutting off the ears, the diaphragm and other parts of the body to make powerful war-charms (See Chapter IV). The graves of the chiefs of Nondwane are said to be invisible, just like the hut of the nyokwekulu. They are known by Magomanyana alone (Mboza). (Magomanyana is the nearest relative of the late Maphunga, the only brother whom he spared).

When the year of secrecy is over, the official proclamation of the mourning is made. (Ba palusha nkosi.) The people come to the capital, clan after clan, sounding their fanfares on trumpets of antelope horns (bunanga, see Chapter III), and bringing with them an ox or a goat. These animals are slaughtered and their bladders are presented to the heir, who pins them into his hair, so that, without any official proclamation having been made, every warrior at once recognises the future chief. All heads are shaven in sign of mourning, the adult men remove their wax crown (p. 129) and the people are clothed in *malopa* (a blue cloth); but as the death is not of recent date and has been known more or less for some time, the outward manifestations of grief are reduced to a minimum and dances follow in their train. The delegates from the adjoining countries also come to express their condolences. When all have paid their respects, the mourning is really ended (nkosi wu yu l). The King is dead, long live the King!

As we saw, amongst the Nkunas the proclamation of the death of a chief is made on the same day as the installation of his successor.

586 away by her husband. Sometimes he must forego as much as £ 1. or £ 2 of the lobolo, because he has not brought the woman back in peace. He has spoilt the fence of the village by ill-treating a girl coming from it. He must repair it with that money... Khandlela refused, saying: "We have not driven her away! She went back of her own accord; you have even found a new husband for her!" What could the Ngwetsas do? They had just used the lobolo of Gidhlana to buy a wife for Mubene, her brother. The money had already been given to the Moyane clan from which a girl had been chosen by Mubene. They consequently went to the Moyanes and asked them to return the money. But the Moyanes said: "Your money has already gone further. We have used it to buy a girl of Madjieta for our son. We will go and fetch it." So two projected marriages were prevented; they would have been annulled, had they been already concluded! In this way Khandlela found his money!

587 Later on Gudu came back from Johannesburg and took Gidhlana as his wife. Hoping that he had earned some money, the Nwgetsas went to him and said: "You have spoilt our flock (ntlhambi)" viz., the oxen which we hoped to get by the sale of our daughter. "Now pay!" Muzila said to them: "Look at Shaputa; we trust in her!" Shaputa was a little girl, the sister of Gudu. Muzila proposed to Ngwetsa's people to consider her as theirs: "They would find money through her." They consented to wait till she was of age. Some years elapsed.

766 Muzila moved to the Mabota country with Gudu. Gidhlana was suddenly taken ill with leprosy and the disease made rapid progress. She died. Muzila, the master of the village, informed Ngwetsa. Ngwetsa did not come to the burial, neither did any member of the family attend it. Was it not leprosy? Is not the contagion terrible for members of the family?... Other people can bury a leper; his relatives never. However they allowed their fears to go too far, for decency required that, in such a case, some relatives at least should go and witness the burial, even though they might keep far away from the grave. Their behaviour greatly grieved Muzila and entailed unexpected consequences!

587 766 Shaputa grew to be a young woman and a suitor, of the Honwana clan, came and bought her. The Ngwetsas heard of it and at once put in their claim. Muzila informed Gudu, who was then staying near Lourenço Marques. "He fell on his back from the shock!" (o gaa hi le ntjhaku!) and refused to pay. Muzila said to Ngwetsa: "You have forfeited your claim, as you did not attend the funeral. Moreover

But the terrible calamity of drought is brought into direct
relation with some physiological phenomena which no one would 789
have thought of in this connection : the miscarriage of women 821
when the foetus has not been dealt with according to rule, the 843
birth of twins, the death of children not yet received into the tribe 845
by the ceremony of *boha puri* (I. p. 56) and not buried in wet 766
ground ; these are the great natural causes which prevent rain 171
from falling! I have met with this conception all over the
Thonga tribe. I found it also amongst the Pedis of the Trans-
vaal, who firmly believe it, and it would be most interesting to
know if Suthos, Zulus, and Hottentots have the same superstitions. Let me quote the *ipsissima verba* of Mankhelu, the great 789
medicine-man of the Nkuna Court. I shall never forget the 821
earnest tone of his voice, his deep conviction, when he uttered 843
to me the following words, as a kind of revelation : "When a 783
woman has had a miscarriage, when she has let her blood flow
secretly and has buried the abortive child in an unknown place,
it is enough to make the burning winds blow, and to dry up all the
land : the rain can no longer fall, because the country is no longer
right (tiko a ra ha lulami). Rain fears that spot. It must stop
at that very place and can go no further. This woman has been
very guilty. She has spoilt the country of the chief, because she
has hidden blood which had not yet properly united to make a
human being. That blood is taboo! What she has done is taboo.
It causes starvation."

"What then must be done?" — "The chief will collect his men and ask them : 'Are you in a normal state?' (lit. are you right?). They answer : 'Such and such a woman was pregnant but nobody knows what she has brought forth.' This woman will be arrested and told to go and show us where she has put it. The earth is dug up ; the hole is sprinkled with a decoction made of two drugs prepared in a special pot, the *mbendula* and *nyangale* ; the woman herself must wash her body every day with that medicine. Then a little of the earth taken from the hole will be scraped up and thrown into the river ; water drawn from the river will be poured into the hole : the country will be well again, and then the rain will come.

"Moreover, we, the medicine-men, after having sent old

"it is the law of the country!" Every one consents to the suspension of the ordinary laws! (1)

Amongst the Rongas, I did not hear of any connection between prematurely born children and rain. When the mbelele rite is performed, a mother of twins must lead the procession of women who draw water and pour it on the graves of the twins in order to secure the rain. They also clean all the wells (kuha tinhlobo), digging them afresh and removing any filth in the water. It may be that the corpse of a twin, if it has been buried in dry ground, will be dug out of its grave and buried again near the river, or they will go in procession and pour water on the grave. This will influence Heaven, which is killing the earth by the terrible heat of the sun. The burning October winds will cease and the rain will fall.

There is something mysterious about all these customs. Considered merely as ideas regarding Nature and natural phenomena, I believe their essential meaning to be this : — there are some cases of human birth which are taboo. While any birth is taboo, owing to the lochia, that of children prematurely born is doubly dangerous. Abnormal children, such as twins, children who have died before the "boha puri" rite (I. p. 56), in some clans also children who cut their upper teeth first, share this noxious character. They are a calamity for the whole land as they are connected with the mysterious power of Heaven, and so prevent the rain from falling. The great remedy for the evil, the only means of counteracting this influence, is to bury these children in wet ground. Should this not have been done, the chief must order these little corpses to be exhumed and buried near the river : this is the aim and object of the mbelele. If wet, these graves will cause no harm (2).

How did these extraordinary conceptions first originate ?

(1) This rite of *mbelele* shows striking analogies with the Passage rites which we have already often met with in Thonga customs. This is a special period, a mourning period for the land, says Viguet, a marginal period which, as such, is accompanied by obscene manifestations, both in speech and in absence of clothing.

(2) In the Maluleke clan, as previously mentioned, these three categories of children must be *cremated*, and foreigners dying in the midst of the clan are also burnt after their death, from fear that they might belong to one of these categories and so prevent the rain from falling, if they were buried in dry ground. The mbelele rite there is called *nkalenkala*. Rangane describes it as follows : — Women collect the bones of twins,

stem *kwemba* is never used, and its meaning is unknown. There is another form, *nkwembu*, of the class mu-mi, very rarely used, and having the same meaning, and the word *bukwembu*, the abstract noun derived from the same root. Bukwembu is the "power which creates life and death, which gives riches, or which makes poor," says Viguet. In Pedi the ancestor-gods are called *badimo*, a word which seems to be related to *Khedimo* (above, in heaven). But I have heard this connection doubted (1). In Zulu the etymology of *indhlozi* and *itongo*, employed to designate the ancestor-gods, is also unknown, which is a pity, as it would have been interesting to see if the stem from which they come also means above. Is it not strange that in these three closely-connected languages the terms used for the spirits, about which they have exactly the same ideas, are absolutely without any linguistic relation? In Sutho, these spirits belong to the class "mu-ba," the class of persons, which seems natural. In Zulu their two names are of the class yin-tin and dji-ma, respectively ; in Thonga they belong to the shi-psi class. This dissimilarity is indeed curious.

769 776 193 [171]

2) Categories of Ancestor-Gods.

Since every human being becomes a shikwembu after death, there are consequently many categories of these. What is the fate of little children? If they die in infancy no religious ceremony is performed over their grave, nor are any prayers offered to them. The twig rite (I. p. 142) only begins for children who have died at the age of puberty. Infants are, however, seen in the sacred woods amongst the adult gods. This is one of the points about

[766] 776 769

(1) The Vendas call the ancestor-gods *badzimo*, which is evidently the same word as the Sutho badimo. The Rev. Th. Schwellnus told me he thought that the etymology of this word was the verb dzima (in Thonga tima) which means to extinguish (Tmsula tora means to quench the thirst). The badzimo would thus be those who bring relief, who remove anguish. As this stem dzimo under various forms is widespread amongst the Bantu tribes to designate the ancestor-gods, it would be interesting to know if the corresponding verb dzima also exists and if this etymology is clearly established. The word *ntimu*, sacred wood, in Thonga, may perhaps come from the same root.

776 which there is no very clear explanation ; doubtless the matter did
769 not seem worthy of inquiry!

The two great categories of gods are *those of the family*, and *those of the country*, the latter being those of the reigning family. They lo not differ as regards their nature. In national calamities those of the country are invoked, whilst, for purely family matters, those of the family are called upon.

769 Moreover, each family has two sets of gods, those *on the father's*
side and *those on the mother's*, those of "kweru" and those of
776 "bakokwana" (I. p. 268). They are equal in dignity. Both can
602 be invoked, and the divinatory bones are always called on to decide to which the offering must be made. It would seem, however, as if the gods of the mother's side were more tender-hearted and more popular than those of the father's. The reason for this is, perhaps, that relations are easier with the family of the mother than with that of the father. It is also just possible that it is a relic of the matriarchal period, when the ancestors of the mother alone were known, and consequently invoked. At any rate, the part played by batukulu nephews in the offerings shows that they are the true representatives of the gods, not of those of their father, but of their mother.

776 Two other categories of gods, which I have sometimes heard
769 mentioned, are the *Gods of assagais* (psikwembu psa matlhari)
766 and *the Gods of bitterness* (psa shibiti). The former are those who have been killed in battle ; the latter are those who have been drowned, killed by a wild beast, or who have committed suicide, or the pregnant woman who has been buried without being cut open (I. p. 166). In most of these cases, as is evident, the corpse has not been buried with the due rites and ceremonies ; the deceased has not been properly cared for : hence his bitterness ; or, as in the case of the pregnant woman, something has been buried without having first breathed its last breath (I. p. 140). In the case of the suicide, the poor man who hanged himself was full of sadness : "The great bitterness is the rope", said Mboza. In most of these cases no one was present at the death! These gods are therefore angry, and are the most to be feared.

000 The *Gods of the Bush, Psikwembu psa Nhoba*, are also especially

case in respect to the story of Nwahungukuri, which I have published in *Les Ba-Ronga*, p. 312, and in which Heaven is credited with the full knowledge of a hidden crime committed by a murderer. This idea is so far from being an innovation due to European influence that thoughtful Natives all agree that, in former times, it was more usual to attribute death to the power of Heaven. It was a common saying that "Heaven has fallen (ku we Tilo) on such and such a village." Nowadays it is rather the gods, or the wizards, who are believed to cause death.

But this belief in Heaven has not only inspired these sayings, songs, and tales; it has also given rise to curious customs, a description of which will throw more light on this conception of the Thongas. Their existence proves that we are not here dealing with the "animatic" invention of some person gifted with a vivid imagination (p. 366), but with a true tribal belief.

II. *Customs Connected with the Conception of Heaven.*

1) Heaven, Twins and Rain.

This power, which causes lightning and death, also presides, in a very special way, at the *birth of twins*, so much so that the mother is called by the name of "Tilo," — "Heaven," — and the children "Bana ba Tilo," — "Children of Heaven" (1). Now the arrival of two or three babies at the same time is looked upon by the Thongas as a great misfortune, a defilement in respect of which very special rites must be performed. I give the details of these rites as practised in the Zihlahla, Nondwane, and Nkuna clans, as they were described to me by Tobane, Mboza, Mankhelu, etc.

Twins (bahla, or bandjwa, dji-ma) are now both allowed to live. But in former times, one of them, the one which appeared to be the feebler, was always put to death, being left to die of

(1) In our school at Lourenço Marques there was a charming young girl, who was named Nwana-wa-Tilo, Daughter of Heaven, because she had a twin brother.

845 starvation, or strangled by a rope. It was buried in a broken
847 pot, like other infants (I. p. 165), just below the surface of the
766 ground, a hole being left for the air to enter, so that the "spirit (moya) may go out," in order that, for the mother also, the "spirit may get out," may be able to fly out and not close (the passages), this being a primary condition of her having other children (1).

845 But even the death of one of the twins is not considered sufficient
756 to remove the curse. Directly after birth a particular doctor is
783 sent for, who keeps the drugs needed in such a case. Shimhuntana and Manganyele were the medicine-men who were capable of dealing with the twin defilement in the district of Lebombo, and Ñwashihuhuri of the Matimela family in the Zihlahla clan. They were held only to be surpassed by the medicine-man who treated cases of leprosy. The mother has to leave the village immediately, and they build for her a miserable little hut behind the others, where she goes to live with her twins. Her former hut is burnt with all her possessions.

In *Zihlahla*, all the women assemble that same day and start out in all directions, North, South, East and West to draw water in old calabashes from all the lakes and wells of the neighbourhood. They go skipping along, and singing

"Mbelele ! Mbelele ! Let rain fall"

This is the mbelele song (p. 318).

Then they return. The mother is seated with her two babes in her arms. They throw the water over her, intoning all the while the same monotonous refrain. This ceremony is to begin the removal of the "misfortune of twin birth, which is a death," (khombo dja lihahla, dji nga lifu). To complete the purification the magician gives to the father and mother a certain drug, which is kept in the Matimela family. The mother will put some of this into the little milombyana calabash, containing the diet-drink of newly born infants.

In *Khosen* the purification is performed by the medicine-man

(1) Even if a child dies at the age of ten days or more, if it is buried in the ground, its grave must be quite shallow ; for if it were buried too deep the mother would have no other children.

845 *made Heaven* (a hambi Tilo), to have *carried Heaven* (a rwi Tilo), to
772 have *ascended to Heaven* (a khandjiyi Tilo). This connection
789 established between her and Heaven is clearly seen in the *rain customs* previously described. Notice that the day following the
766 birth of twins is a *shimusi*, i. e. a day of rest. Nobody tills the ground, fearing that it would prevent rain from falling. When the *mbelele* takes place in Nondwane and Zihlahla (p. 318), the half naked women who are sent to clean the wells take with them a mother of twins. This is no doubt in order to show them where the graves of twins are. But there is also another reason. In the sacred wood of Libombo there is a hole into which the woman is put ; her sisters then pour on to her the water which they have drawn from all the wells, till the hole is half full, and the water comes up to her breasts. This will cause the rain to fall. Why is this? No doubt because, the woman of Heaven being wet, Heaven itself will be wet. Spoon did not give this explanation himself, but, when I suggested it to him, he accepted it readily. For the same reason the graves of twins are watered. In certain cases water is poured on the graves of the ancestors also, because rain is attributed both to them and to Heaven, and this watering the graves is meant to induce either Heaven or the ancestor-gods to cause rain to fall. Hence again the precaution taken of burying twins in damp places, and of exhuming them in times of drought if they have been buried in dry ground (1).

845 The connection between twins and Heaven, so clearly to
772 be seen in these customs, appears again in respect to thunder-
821 storms, which, as we shall see, are another manifestation of Heaven.
789 When lightning threatens a village, people say to a twin : "Help us! You are a Child of Heaven! You can therefore cope with Heaven (mi kota Tilo), it will hear you when you speak." So the child

845 (1) In other clans this law is extended to children prematurely born, even though they
761 are not twins, and even to children who have not had the cotton string tied round their waist or who have cut their upper teeth first. On the other hand, among the Nkunas
772 no special connection seems to be established between twins and Heaven. These differences may be explained by the fact that all these abnormal cases were ascribed to
766 Heaven in former times, and the connection has been preserved in the various clans in respect to one or the other of these categories. Note that, in the song of the widows (I. p. 207), the king Heaven appears to have caused the death of the husband; this is another proof that Heaven was formerly considered the most frequent cause of death.

756 village, he would find it full of enormous snakes, surrounding the magic branch. Khongosa, who inhabited the district called Nkanyen, on the Eastern border of the Nkomati, wished to possess the marvellous *ndzundzu* drug ; so one night he crossed the river and tried to steal it. But Sindondondo was on his guard, his protective charms were working. They caught his rival, who was *shwela*, viz., imprisoned till after sunrise. Sindondondo behaved magnanimously : "Why, my friend (gobelakulori), did you not come in daylight to ask for my medicine? I would have given it to you! I could cover you with shame now, and show all the people what kind of an exorcist you are! But I have pity on you! Go home." And he released him. Mboza was fully persuaded of the truth of this story.

It may happen that a disciple emancipates himself and founds a new society of the exorcised ; this is, of course, very unpleasant for his master, as the new doctor will start a dangerous competition and refuse to pay any more fees to his initiator ; he will proclaim himself as his superior. So the old gobela goes to his altar and prays his Ngoni gods to make the drugs of his rival powerless. This prayer is heard, and the young gobela is obliged to ask for forgiveness, and to pay a fine of £ 1 in order to obtain success in his future cures. He may perhaps *succeed* his master, but only when the latter is dead.

5) Funeral rites of the exorcised.

766 The burial of the exorcised is attended by other mathwazana,
756 and by his disciples, if he was an exorcist, and special rites are observed for his funeral. The corpse is taboo. It must be covered with ochre. The grave is smeared with clay, and the body is not laid down on its side, but is placed in a sitting position, its hand holding the assagay, or hatchet, which the deceased used when dancing and singing the songs of exorcism. A bunch of *shibowa*, a Urticaria which grows in water, is placed on his head : "*This is to cool him*, because his poor head has been so tired, it has suffered so much from anguish, pain, excitement!" The grass, being taken from the water, also appears *to cool the spirits*, who will

thus remain in the grave, and not trouble other people. Moreover a little hut is built on the grave itself, as was the case for Sokis (I. p. 141), with the same intention, to protect the exorcised against heat and fatigue. If the deceased was not only a disciple but a master, his drugs will be stored in the hut till the adjudication of the inheritance. The most skilful of his followers, the one who best knows the use of these charms, will dance on the grave, all his companions clapping their hands to encourage him, and, when the mourning is ended, he will "raise the drugs," burning them as is done at the annual feast, and will eventually succeed his master.

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6) Conclusion on Possession.

Cases of possession, such as those which occur amongst the Thongas, are met with in a great many other countries. A Swiss missionary, the Rev. H. Rusillon, working in the Paris Mission in Madagascar, has drawn attention to practices very similar to these, called the Tromba, amongst Hovas. It is impossible not to note the striking resemblance between the Thonga disease and that of the demoniacs of the New Testament. On hearing the story of the madman in Gadara, whose spirit called itself Legion, the Natives at once identify the phenomenon, and say: "These demoniacs had psikwembu."

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These psychological phenomena are certainly of a morbid character. The fact that they generally appear in an epidemic form is significant. It has been noticed that similar epidemics have broken out in populations which have been weakened by the sufferings of a long war, when the nervous resistance had been reduced by privations. May not the progress of Alcoholism, together with the disintegration of the old social order caused by the influence of European civilisation, account for the spread of the disease amongst the Ba-Ronga in the last fifty years?

Whilst not pretending to analyse these phenomena scientifically and fully, I will here add two observations:

1) In the Jewish conception, phenomena of possession were due to *evil spirits*, devilish agencies, which tormented poor humanity, and were cured by the power of the real and true God. Dualism prevailed in their religious conceptions. This idea of dualism is altogether absent from the Thonga belief. South African Bantus have not yet reached that stage of religion where the antagonistic ideas of right and wrong are